treatment and Research institute held recently in Gwalior had expressed their view that when cancer becomes incurable, opium can prove effective;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government would like to review the restrictions imposed on opium so that it could be made available to the deserving patients;

(d) if so, when; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the HOUSE.

[English]

State Roads into N.Hs. in Maharashtra

2400. SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the criteria followed by the Union Government to declare State Roads as National Highways;

(b) the names of the State Roads in Maharashtra declared as National Highways during the past three years;

(c) the details of representations of the State Government of Maharashtra pending with the Union Government of declaring State Roads as National Highways; and

(d) since when the proposals of State Government are pending and the time by which these are likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) Roads which run through length and breadth of country; roads connection adjacent countries; road connecting State Capitals; roads connecting major ports and important industrial or tourist centres; roads meeting very important strategic requirement; roads carrying high density of traffic over an adequate length and roads which will enable sizeable reduction in travel distance and achievements of substantial economies thereby, any considered for declaration as National Highways subject to availability of funds.

(b) No new National Highway has been declared in Maharashtra during the last three years.

(c) and (d) During the 8th Five Year Plan, as many as 12 proposals aggregating to a length of 4841 Kms were received. However none of the proposals could be approved due to continued resource crunch.

Multi-Purpose Water Resources Projects

2401. SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government propose to invite private sector participation in multi-purpose water resources projects;

(b) if so, which are the projects identified in Andhra Pradesh during the past one year for the said purpose;

(c) whether any private sector companies have shown any keenness to participate therein; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) For examining the feasibility and scope of private sector participation in Irrigation and Multi-Purpose Projects, the Government constituted a high level Committee which submitted its report on 22nd December, 1995. The Committee concluded that while private sector participation is feasible in respect of all irrigation (surface and ground water) and multi-purpose projects, it would be desirable to introduce this on pilot basis for selected projects. A copy of the report has already been sent to all States/Union Territories for necessary action.

(b) There is no such proposal of the Government of Andhra Pradesh at present.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

[Translation]

Foetus Tests

2402. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of foetus tests conductad in the country during the last three years;

(b) the number of cases of foeticide (female) out of the foetus tests conducted;

(c) whether the Government have formulated any comprehensive policy for checking foetus tests as well as foeticides; and

(d) if so, the details thereof the time by which it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) and (b) This information is not monitored by Government of India.

(c) and (d) The Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 which has come into force on 1.1.96 provides for the regulation of the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques and

prevention of the misuse of such techniques for the purpose of pre-natal sex determination leading to female foeticide.

[English]

SAARC Meeting

2403. SHRI HARIN PATHAK :
SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the subjects discussed at South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meetings held in New Delhi recently;

(b) the details of the resolutions passed or declarations adopted at the end of the summit meeting;

(c) whether SAARC countries have discussed steps to ease visa restrictions and motivate tourism amongst themselves;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the future role envisaged for Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in international relations?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Subjects discussed at the meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers in December, 1996 included, inter alia, the Integrated Programme of Action, Regional Economic Cooperation, cooperation in social issues such as poverty eradication, women and children, implementation of SAARC Conventions on Suppression of Terrorism and on Drug Trafficking, and the promotion of people-to-people contacts.

(b) The report adopted at the conclusion of the SAARC Council of Ministers' Meeting includes important decisions aimed at promotion of Regional Economic Cooperation, inter alia, in the fields of intra-SAARC investments, avoidance of double taxation, customs cooperation and for advancing the SAPTA process; on various social issues relevant to the region; a decision to hold meetings of SAARC Information Ministsers and Environment Ministers for furthering cooperation in their respective areas; and in a variety of fields for promotion of people-to-people contacts.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Council discussed several steps aimed at the promotion of intra-SAARC tourism. It agreed to examine possibilities of expanding airlinks, of the introduction of currency conversion arrangements for tourists in the region; and has recommended the expansion of the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme.

(e) The Non-aligned Movement would continue to be relevant and play a useful role in evolving coordinated collective decisions amongst its member states on issues of importance/concerns to them.

[Translation]

Irrigation Project in Bihar

2404. SHRI RAJESH RANJAN ALIAS PAPPU YADAV : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether water resources are being utilised fully in the country, particularly in Bihar;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government propose to commission several irrigation projects of Bihar including swaran Rekha Project; and

(d) if so, the steps being taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) (a) No, Sir.

(b) India receives annual precipitation of 4000 billion cubic metres including snowfall, however, the total utilisable water resources in the country is assessed as only 1142 billion cubic metres. Out of this, the present utilisation is about 606 billion cubic metres. Full utilisation of water resources is not possible due to various constraints such as limitations of storage sites, evaporation and vegetative transpiration losses and necessity to maintain river regimes by allowing certain minimum flows in the rivers.

(c) and (d) 17 Major (including Swaran Rekha Project), 24 Medium and 5 Extension, Renovation and Modernisation (ERM) projects are ongoing during Eight Five Year Plan in Bihar. With a view to expedite the completion of selected ongoing major and medium projects, Central Loan Assistance of Rs. 27.00 crores have been sanctioned during 1996-97 under Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) for three major projects of Bihar namely, Upper Kiul, Durgawati and Kosi projects.

Canals in Maharashtra

2405. SHRI KACHARU BHAU RAUT : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased state :

(a) whether the work relating to digging and cleaning of canals is undertaken every year in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the details thereof; location-wise;

(c) whether the Government are aware that some small saplings have grown up in the canals of Maharashtra;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) the preventive measures taken being taken by the Government in this regard?